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ABSTRACT

A study surveyed 99 teacher education students from the Instituto de Educacao de Nova Friburgo (Brazil) by asking open-ended and private questions to know the number and/or the access of students to existing artistic and cultural languages. The research was divided into two stages: (1) an investigation about the information brought by the students from several teaching institutions so that their realities could be known; and (2) a research project conducted by the students themselves about the artistic and cultural languages with the key focal point occurring when each student group presented their results to the class. There were seven languages (music, plastic arts, dance, theater, film, television, and literature) identified for stage two so each class was divided into seven groups to research the languages with different themes. In part two of stage two, the essence of part 1 was maintained, by trying to encircle the country's regional or folkloric knowledge. The general knowledge was limited to the specific one, according to the area or region, changing from the macro to the micro. In part 2, the folkloric languages that permeate Brazilian popular art were emphasized. Results note the difficulties, limitations, and deficiencies of the school and the educational structure of the state and the country. The study noted that students had difficulties in their development of knowledge, with the cultural codes interpretation, and especially with the decentralization of the class over the teacher who knows everything and teaches everything. Includes two graphs with the study's results. (Contains 11 references.) (BT)

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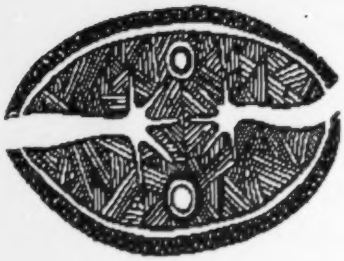

InSEA

# "Art & Culture in a Course for Elementary Teachers - The Artistic Languages and Art Research - Research as an Educational Process in the Elementary Teacher's Training"

by

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SECRETARIA DE EDUCAÇÃO DO ESTADO DO RIO DE JANEIRO

INSTITUTO DE EDUCAÇÃO DE NOVE FRIBURGO
NOVA FRIBURGO - BRASIL

# Art & Culture in a Course for Elementary Teachers

## The Artistic Languages and Art Research – Research as an Educational Process in the Elementary Teacher's Training

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**SUMMARY**

Assuming that "the Art field must allow the students not only to create artistic products, but also appreciate, examine and value the works of art..." *(Revista Escola, Fundação Victor Civita; ano XIII, n. 118, dec/1998)* and also assuming that we need to inform ourselves about the current artistic production in order to take part in society as cultivated citizens, increasing our own horizons and the students' as well, making possible a critical view of the world through the Arts, we have made a research with ninety-nine (99) students from the Course for Elementary teachers of the *Instituto de Educação de Nova Friburgo*, RJ – first grade, by using a questionnaire made of open and private questions, with the purpose of knowing the volume and/or the access of the developing students to the various existing artistic and cultural languages. This research is divided in two essential stages. The first one is an investigation about the information brought by the students from several teaching institutions so that we could know their realities. The second stage proposed a research conducted by the students themselves about the artistic and cultural languages, with the main point occurring when all the groups of students involved have presented their results to the others. It is a participant research where we, as researchers, got in direct touch with the researched phenomenon in order to collect the actions of the actors in their natural context, starting from their perspective and point of view. The value of this research is in the decentralization of the classes out of the teacher's figure and in the definition and conduction of the research as a releasing practice by the students themselves.

**INTRODUCTION**

According to Ferraz and Fusari (1993), in order to understand the existing artistic production as well as its history and determining cultural influences, it is necessary to be always alert, getting a deeper knowledge about the artistic practices, which means that, besides the perception, it is essential to **analyze** the way the esthetic and artistic inter-relations have been occurring along the social and historical process of mankind. In addition, it is necessary to verify the way these cultural relations mobilize the values, the existing ideas concerning the world and the human being as well as the social groups.

*"It is because art constantly mobilize our cultural practices, esthetically showing the multiple visual forms, sonorities, voices, movements, scenes, since our childhood, that we have tried to be aware of how we produce and interpret it. Such awareness may help us to know and recognize art manifestation and interference in our lives. (...) In addition to it, as for the educational process in the arts, we have to verify*

*which of the esthetical and artistic practices of our contemporary lives we want to change or keep and why."* (FERRAZ e FUSARI, p. 18 – 19, 1993)

Under this point of view, we can say that, in the educational development process, it is necessary that our students – teachers in the future – show themselves aware of the existing cultural practices and have in mind that such practices reflect the society we live in. Thus, when we talk about art as a mean of education, as mentioned by Ferraz and Fusari, besides verifying the practices that should or should not continue, we must consider the school substructure limitations, which is within a much bigger context (the social context), without loosing the ability to analyze the available artistic practices and determining our own school practice. In other words, we can make use of alternative materials without losing quality (in any kind of field: visual, sound, tactile, gesture etc.), in a way we might stimulate such awareness in our students and work mates. When we talk about awareness, we mean *knowing* in order to *transform*.
So, we must learn to think in a critical way the artistic "making". This also means showing to our students that the educational contents are in a greater or lesser degree determined by an effective ideology, on behalf of groups of society, in accordance with the interests of such group. Whenever we propose critical analysis, valuation or judgment of values, we are actually preparing a "counter-speech", which is contrary to the traditional teaching, based on teaching and "learning", on a vertical position, in which the teacher represents the one who transmits the knowledge, being the student a simple apprentice.

*"The school education must take the responsibility, through teaching and learning of knowledge accumulated by mankind, of giving the students the instruments they need so that they can exercise their citizenship in a more conscious, critic and participant way."* (FERRAZ e FUSARI, p. 134, 1993)

The teacher Ana Mae Barbosa, having noticed the importance of knowing the art teaching historical process and consciously interfering in such process, has made important analysis and synthesis in this area. In many of her published works, we can see her concern about the democratization of the art consciousness, which means that we must take over the commitment of extending the access of the majority of the people to the esthetic and artistic fields, through a good quality education. She considers the historic recovery of art teaching as an essential process so that one can realize the *"personal and social realities, right here, right now, and handle them in a critical way."* We could say that art is a form of creating languages – the visual language, the music language, the theatre language, the dance language, the movie language and others. Under this point of view, every language is a unique way of people to reflect – reflex/reflection – their existence in the world.

*"The reading of the work of art is a questioning, a quest, a discovery, an awakening of the critical ability and never a limitation of the students to receptacles of the teacher information, no matter how much bright they are."* (BARBOSA, p. 40, 1998)

In accordance with PCN ("Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais" – National Curriculum Standards), art education stimulates the development of artistic thought and esthetical perception, characteristics of a world which organizes and gives sense to the human experience:

*" (...) the students develop their sensibility, perception and imagination whenever they perform artistic forms as well as in the action of appreciating and knowing the forms made by them and their mates, by nature and also in the different kinds of culture."* (PCN, p. 19, 1997)

Under such point of view, we can say that the artistic making, the reading of the work of art and especially the way of putting into context, in addition to the commitment of searching the esthetic perception by the students, developing their artistic and sensorial abilities, are a safeguard for a greater citizenship commitment, whenever they stimulate the students to question and rediscover the world through art and allow a new reading of values, stimulating the ability of a critical analysis, an intentional way of keeping distance so that they can actually observe, put into context the reality which surrounds them and, more that that, problemizing the real world. Under such perspective, you want anything but mere apprentices, students who are only receptacles of the teacher information, vessels to be filled with contents which do not fit neither in their reality nor are able to transform it, being their knowledge ability constantly reduced or ignored. Appreciation, education of feelings and valuation of the quality of the images produced by the artists are a necessary increasing of a free speech so as to make possible the constant development of those who will not necessarily turn into art producers, after finishing school.

Richter (1998) "supports that the teachers should offer learning environments which promote the cultural elementary learning of their students in different cultural codes (...)" The author affirms that the social reference or, in other words, the microcultural context recognition and the comprehension of basic cultural

processes, cannot be lost. However, if schools do not work in order to incorporate such aspects, opening access to other kinds of codes, extending the cultural horizons so that they can embrace diversity, they will be cooperating with the maintenance of the lack of culture democratization as well as with the privilege of few people, not changing the cultural, social and institutional relations responsible for the maintenance of such situation. On the other hand, there will be groups stuck to certain codes without the possibility of going further, expanding, accessing other languages and cultures. Rouanet, quoted by Peregrino (1995), says that this way we shall be keeping the individual in a cultural ghetto, "the individual left aside, who already lives in a social and economic ghetto."

Peregrino (1995) supports that against the imposition of an hegemonic standard, as broadcast by our mass communication systems, schools should create mechanisms which could at the same time guarantee access to everyone to other kinds of cultural codes and also try to preserve the multiplicity of the different groups of our society. We are actually talking about a "two-way" process, where we need to know what already exists in order to know ourselves. However, we cannot give up the comprehension of our own reality, but, on the contrary, we should consider the great entanglement of influences that, in the end, is responsible for cultural development. Under this perspective, we are back to the starting point: knowing in order to transform. To do that, we need our critical and inquisitive view all the time, otherwise, we will be only acquiring a whole lot of information without even knowing what to do with it. Under such point of view, the arts have a fundamental role in this awakening process, activating the sensor towards reflection, investigation, thinking, noticing, understanding and cultural making of a society which should exclude much less. In the same way of thinking, Serrão (1998) argues that,

*"When the students come across the reality which surrounds them, trying to experiment and rationalize such social reality, they are certainly contributing to their intellectual growing, taking part in the society as a "cultivated" citizen, breaking the limits of an old project which no longer can hold our new academic potentials framed within ready formulas. We want to believe in the ability of creation in face of new and untimely situations, since only creative action has a social dimension."* (SERRÃO, 1998)

The author affirms that, when the reflection process is performed, specially through scientific investigation (we make science in all fields), with the help of teachers and students, in order to reach *"(re)discovery, questioning, evolution, which move forward and renew the existing knowledge on behalf of collectivity, we are contributing to the modernization of the educational process."* (SERRÃO, 1998). The author also assures that it is not just a simply methodological process, but primarily a political one.

**Art and Culture in the Teacher's Development – An Experience Report**

**Research Conception – Justification**

From the needing to create opportunities to our students – further Elementary teachers – in order to extend their knowledge about the existing cultural codes, trying to select, analyze and criticize such information through the arts, we came up with the idea of this research. Therefore, it represents a Participant Research, where students and teachers work together towards rediscovery, a new reading of these codes, exploring old and new methods of study and analysis of such manifestations or languages, showing the possibility of working with different themes concerning the artistic and cultural languages and making evident a new work focus on each oriented activity So, a research has been drawn, where the students started to decentralize the control over the class exclusively on the teacher's image. By themselves, they started to lead their own activities in class and sometimes even outside the class. The teacher was responsible for the organization, stimulating the students and helping them to define their own research. We believe in the importance of research as a (re)discover and a new reading of the facts, but also as a critical questioning, evaluation and contents selection. Through research, we could experience other cultural codes (with a vital importance to the educator who is developing himself, because knowledge and the analysis of other cultures contribute in the development of his educational experience and consequently in his construction as a social human being), without getting away from our own regional codes. Whenever we create opportunities for our students – teachers in the future – we are increasing the possibilities of reconsidering a less excluding education, which can make possible the development of the individual not only as a qualified professional, but also as a bio-psycho-social human being, as a politicized citizen he should be. In such process, it is fundamental we recognize that the Arts cannot be seen in the elementary teaching as a "cane" for other disciplinary contents or destined to leisure moments. On the contrary, they represent all of these contents, because they work with discipline among the people, with a esthetic perception and a critical analysis, stimulating sensibility and the creative action. We support an education that will not focus only on the omnipotent figure of the teacher, who knows and transmits everything to the students – mere spectators. With this work, in addition to the results of the research, we are trying to prove that the students are able and

should free themselves from the "straitjacket" represented by formal classes, supported by the presence of a formal teacher, who elaborates his formal classes stuck to didactical books or to an specific method, just as the act of teaching could be summarized in the accumulation or repetition of information without the possibility of creating or reconsidering a new way of looking at reality

**Work Methodology Guideline**

This work represents a participant and open research with the purpose of knowing, increasing and encouraging the acquisition of new cultural codes, regarding the previous knowledge of the students – teachers in the future – of the course for Elementary teachers of the first grade of "Instituto de Educação de Nova Friburgo" (IENF), in Rio de Janeiro. For such purpose, this work was divided in two essential stages:

- First Stage: at this first moment, we carefully worked with the information brought by the student regarding some of the several existing artistic and cultural languages (music, plastic arts, dance, movies, theatre, television and literature). Our goal, at this moment, is to be aware of the students' reality, in the sense of knowing their limits in the search for this information and/or knowledge, the channels used to search these codes, how often they do this, their main concerns and their greater difficulties

We have made use of induction as approach method, with a description procedure. In order to achieve this purpose, we have used the extensive and direct observation technique, through a questionnaire with open and private questions annexed to this work (our instrument to collect data), which was given to ninety-nine (99) students of the first grade of the IENF Course for Elementary Teachers, divided in three classes, constituting a census, formed with all the students of the first grade of the mentioned course, during the 1997 first semester. After collecting the questionnaires, we have started the analysis of the results, trying to quantify them through descriptive statistics. From the analysis of such results, we have continued to the second stage of the work.

- Second Stage: the second stage is divided in two parts, which, for didactical purposes, will be called Part I and Part II, representing the development of the work, where students also ride through the research path, having an active participation during this period.

**Part I:** Witn the results found after collecting data from the questionnaire referred to in the first stage, we have suggested the students a group research, with the purpose of investigate the various artistic and cultural languages already mentioned so that they could increase the students' knowledge concerning other universal cultural codes. Since there were seven (7) languages: music, plastic arts, dance, theatre, movies, television and literature, each class was divided in seven groups in order to research these languages, with different discussed themes.

**Part II:** The same essence of the first part was maintained, this time trying to encircle the country's regional or folkloric knowledge. In other words, the general knowledge was limited to the specific one, according to the area or region, changing from the macro to the micro one. During this part, we have tried to emphasize the folkloric languages that permeate our popular art as well as music, dancing, culinary art, craftsmanship, clothing or typical costumes, literature – tales, popular ballads, pamphlets, legends – games, uses and habits of the five different regions of the country: South, Southeast, Center-east, Northeast and North regions.

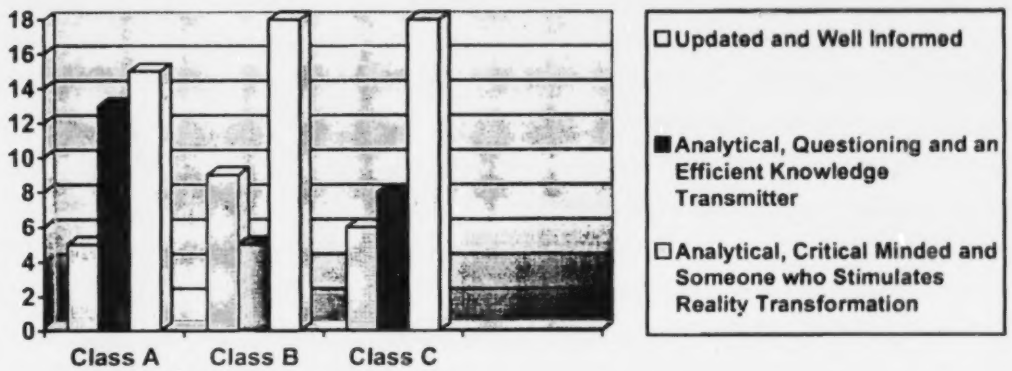
Both of the parts that form the second stage have taken two months each, with one month aimed for research (through books, articles, videos, records, tapes, magazines and newspapers, etc.) and the second month aimed for the presentation of the results, under a creative form, where each group presented their work to the other students of the class.

**Results Presentation**

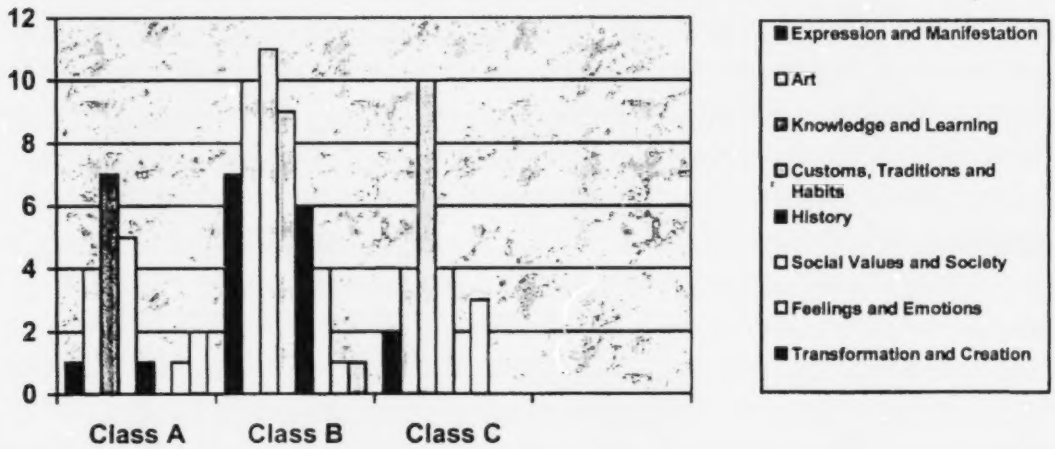
**First Stage**

**Results Obtained Using the Questionnaire of the First Stage**

**Picture 1 – Characteristic components of a good educator, according to the conception of the interviewed students**




**Picture 2 – Terms used more often by the students in order to define the word "culture"**



**Results – Debating**

**First Stage:**

**Debating on the Results Obtained Using the Questionnaire: Analysis of the Presented Charts**

***Chart 1***

As for Teaching and Research, Demo (1997) explains the following:

*"(...) Taken as a definite sign of our educational and scientific reality, many people are prepared to accept universities that can only teach, as for example the typical case of the institutions operating at night, where the students attend the classes only to learn and pass and the teachers, most of them doing part-time odd jobs, only teach. Often, the teachers who only teaches, specially in primary and high school, study just once in their lives, gathering a certain portion of knowledge and, afterwards, they pass it along to the students, within a reproduced pedagogy, less and less updated. However, such image is a predominant part of the university, even though it is overwhelming: the great majority of the teachers just teach, either because they do not control the research techniques or especially because they consider the split as a gift. They have got into teaching by "choice" and spent their lives telling the students what they have learned from somebody else, copying and reproducing as a consequence."* (DEMO, 1997)

If we superficially analyze *chart 1*, which reflects the *characteristic components of a good educator* (question n. 14 of the annexed questionnaire), we will immediately note that all three investigated classes, in most cases, have given answers related to the same options, in other words, a good educator is the one who *stimulates the students to acquire knowledge through analysis and critics and transform the reality*. We had initially assumed that the students would mostly choose A and B options, which developed components with a focus in a more traditional teaching.

When collecting the data, we have noted that the more chosen option had been the one indicating a more *innovative* teaching, with characteristic components of a more releasing education, regarding that such release should not be considered without the research practice. Nevertheless, we were not allowed to be surprised and we started to look for a reasonable explanation for such result. We have assumed that the first grade students' do not yet have a distinct view of both kinds of education under focus: the *traditional* and the more *innovative* one, which tries to get knowledge through a critical analysis in order to question and transform reality. On the other hand, we could not underestimate the students' sensibility or dissatisfaction with the current standard. Although they may not have this kind of reading under a technical point of view, they actually are able to feel the components that distinguish both standards. Such tendency to "complain" or "transform" are very significant throughout the work, even though sometimes the same students have taken conservative positions. Such characteristic elements of an education vertically oriented also can be noted in the same chart, which can be acceptable, since they are all products of a traditional education.

***Chart 2***

This chart shows the expressions that were used more times by the students to define the word "culture" (question n. 1 of the annexed questionnaire). It is an open question and so, the terms appearing on the chart represented words or expressions more mentioned by the students in their answers. We have verified that the students still keep a point of view based on a traditional education, regarding culture as very elitist and conservative, where knowledge and learning are supreme and determinant over feelings, emotions and even transformation and the creative action.

*"The link between art and culture in the art teaching historic has tendencies that live together in school even nowadays. Although they are overcome, we have considered art as a cultural varnish within an hegemonic conception that denoted erudition and art has already had the sense of a professional activity, preparing young people to face the market with specific technical abilities. At another time, art seemed to have a purpose of promoting the individual's expressive, cognitive and affective development, emphasizing creativity and spontaneity. Such classification can be gathered in two different moments regarding art profile in the*

*curriculum: - YESTERDAY – a paradox between the ideological concerns in breaking up the hegemonic attitude of the European culture, establishing cultural references that are part of the curriculum as folklore or popular culture and, at the same time, the maintenance of the idealized cultural standards forms. Anyway, the contents were kept steady, since they did not handle with a living reality. The emphasis of this moment was knowing and preserving such contents. – TODAY – emphasis in culture, living and dynamic contents, related to the process. It works with cultural diversity, incorporating more global aspects and new fields of artistic making. So, nowadays, culture is presented under this perspective in the art curriculum. However, some problems still remain. Unfortunately, there is a gap between speech and practice caused not only by non-critical attitudes of teachers and students, but also by their totally different universes."*
(GUIMARÃES, p. 66-67, 1998)

Actually, we have a paradox because if we look at the chart again, we will verify that art was mentioned eighteen (18) times. The way the answers and definitions are presented, there is a dichotomy between art and feelings, emotions, transformation and the creative action itself, as the first one (art) do not gathered all of the others. We could say that the students were lost in the definition of the words culture and art, if we considered their own definitions to the comprehension and understanding of what is the meaning of "culture". As for the finished information and creativity, Alencar (1990) explains:

*"Brazilian education has its bad habits. One of them is to valorize knowledge memorization and "non-thinking". It is an already prepared information that arrives and is assimilated. This can mean the dichotomy of the student with the act of thinking. The creative potential is inhibited and blocked by lack of stimulus, encouraging and of an environment propitious to its development. Fantasy and imagination are minimized, turning the developing student into an unprepared person to face the unknown."* (ALENCAR, 1990)

**Second Stage:**

**Discussion on the Results Obtained with the Students' Result Presentation on the Artistic and Cultural Languages or Manifestation during *part I* and *part II*.**

Our goal is to discuss such results, in a more generic form, as a research practice, where the students were aware of their difficulties and limitations, trying to handle with them so that they could present the research, which has its merit not only on the technique or used resources, but mainly on the awareness that they, as students and teachers, have decentralized the attention from the formal class, based on books and on the entitled teacher, trying to orient and conduct the class, which, in our case, is represented by the research practice and its various kinds of presentation. The information concerning the several artistic and cultural languages brought by the student investigated on the first stage of this work becomes the guideline to the research, conducted by them and performed on the second stage. As researchers, we have got directly in touch with the researched phenomenon in order to collect the actors' actions in their natural context, from their perspective and their point of view as well. About the Participant Research, Chizzotti (1991) explains:

*"The straight observation might aim a 'sharp' description of the components of a certain situation: the subjects, in their personal and private aspects, the place and the circumstances, time and its variations, the actions and their meaning, the conflicts and the tune of interpersonal and social relationships as well as the attitude and the behavior in face of reality. (...) In this case, the observer takes part through a constant interaction in all the spontaneous and formal situations, attending the usual and daily actions, the circumstances and the sense of such actions by questioning the actions and the meaning of their acts."*
(CHIZZOTTI, p. 90 – 91, 1991)

The presentation results in *part I* were checked according to the kind of presentation made by the students. We were not worried about analyzing the technique sophistication or the used resource, but with the originality and creativity of the event, examining the student's critical profile towards the developed theme. Under such point of view, there were groups developing their research themes making use of a critical sense, through exaggerated demonstrations and critical parodies. For example, a group of the class A, working on the television language and developing the theme *children's programs announcers*, has made use of dramatization or body language. In another situation, a certain group that had been working on the music language, particularly the theme *development of Brazilian popular music*, has come up with a presentation of a musician from the community that would perform in school playing songs that would show the several resources of the instrument. Therefore, we notice an interaction with the own community, which became a participant agent in the pedagogical process.

At another time, where the developed language was *movies*, with the theme *movies for children* and *cartoons in the movies*, the group was especially worried about the comprehension and demonstration of the technical part, using videos and doing practical and demonstrative exercises through the animation of drawn pictures, trying to give life and put their drawings in motion, like setting a 'thaumatrope', a technique created in 1924 by Dr. John Ayton Paris. In addition to the demonstrative part, it is important to remark that a written document about the language corresponding to the research was handed, getting to the bottom of the developed theme. Such written document was an inherent part of all the researches made by all the groups and in all the classes, becoming the literature review stage of the researched theme.

During *part II*, the students tried to work on the folkloric manifestations of the country, in accordance with each different region. The researches made use of the contact with the Brazilian culture itself, characterizing each region. In this part, the presentations developed the specific regional manifestations, making evident the customs and habits of a certain population, with its due singularities. Some groups have worked on the culinary part, describing the origins and the importance of certain dishes in some communities. Exotic and typical dishes were prepared and taken to class to be appreciated, tasted and discussed by the other groups. People of the community, from several regions of the country, were invited to present their artistic works, like craftsmanship as well as to present and discuss their typical regional costumes. In all the classes, the group researching dance has recreated a choreography originated from the research about regional rhythms, trying to show as authentically as possible the movements and meaning of the different dances, according to each region. As an example, the dance group from class B, working on the North – Northeast regions, has brought to class the rhythm, characterization and movement which are part of the *folguedo* of *'bumba-meu-boi'* or *'boi-de-mamão'*. In order to improve the research, we have sent letters to the tourism department of the States of each region asking for material to the development of the research.

***"The folklore appliance is the utilization of science in another field, with defined goals. (...) Education can and must make use of it, either in university level, aiming the theory and practice training of elements destined to folkloric researches (generally or in specialized areas), or in primary or high school in order to improve the established content and fit it into the national reality."***
(RIBEIRO, p.33, 1980)

**Conclusion**

*At the moment of conclusion of a research, we have to review the targets established in the beginning and whether such targets have been completely reached. . The value of this work, which now we can see more clearly, is that we have managed to break with the formal and vertical teaching through our own experience (represented here by this research), allowing the student to move from a passive attitude and start to act in the definition of the contents to be developed. Although the information they have selected may serve them as a cultural experience, the meaning of it goes beyond the mere information accrual. When the students get into the research and are looking forward to searching information, they keep in their hands a new teaching idea, even though they do not get aware of it immediately. The research, and not just the library research, which is not bound to the political action or the critical analysis of contents, provides the student with an awareness and a new definition of what teaching/learning is, in a dialectic process where one do not exist without the other. The students learn and have a lot to teach as well. Perhaps that was our major lesson. The difficulties, limitations and deficiencies of the school and the educational structure of the State and also of the country, and especially the overcoming of such difficulties in the development of their knowledge, the cultural codes interpretation, but mainly the decentralization of class over the teacher who "knows everything and teaches everything", have shown that what the educators, pedagogues and researchers so fiercely support can also be implemented in our school practice, with this new teaching view.*
*If we closely analyze the results collected with this research, not only the presentation results, but also the meaning of the research as a pedagogic practice and a way of applying the critical analysis on behalf of the students – teachers in the future – we then could say that we have succeeded in the task to reach our targets!*

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